

Situation in Albania

8 May 1953

The loss of Albania to the Orbit would probably involve a loss of prestige, rather than a loss of a nation of economic or military value to the USSR. The country is small (1,200,000 persons) and divided. Its industry is negligible and its social system still largely revolves around the clan system.

Dissatisfaction with the regime is apparently widespread, even within the armed forces and the Communist Party. Guerilla activity was common during 1952, largely in the northern part of the country. The regime was able to control these activities, however, because of the efforts of the security forces, the inability of the population to unite against the regime, and the fear of many Albanians that liberation would result in the partition of their country.

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The Albanian military and security forces, with a total strength of approximately 50,000, are considered capable of maintaining order in peacetime. Although not entirely trustworthy themselves, these forces are under the control of Moscow-trained Communist officials and are supervised by an estimated 500 Soviet military advisers.

The Albanian armed forces are considered of less value to the USSR than those of any other Satellite. They are probably incapable of launching a successful attack against a neighboring country or of withstanding a military invasion. (It has been estimated, however, that Albania might muster 100,000 guerrillas for harrassment of an invader.) Units of the Army's three line divisions are disposed for the most part around the capital and along the land routes from Yugoslavia and Greece. Their equipment and training are generally poor. There has been no marked improvement in air defense capabilities in recent years as in the other Satellites, and Albania's air strength consists of only one squadron of conventional fighters. The Navy possesses small craft only.

The security forces are probably more reliable and effective than the Army, and were reorganized in 1952 into eleven Frontier Guard battalions and two mobile security brigades.

Although Albania is dependent upon the economic support of the Orbit, it is physically isolated from the other Communist states. Communications are primarily by sea. An average of about 20 ships per month called at Albanian ports during 1952; of these, two-thirds were Orbit owned. Over half of the total were tankers delivering refined petroleum products and picking up Albanian asphalt and crude oil, which together with chrome ore constitute Albania's only important exports. There is also one plane weekly from Budapest to Tirana via Belgrade. The Yugoslav Government requires that the plane stop at Belgrade en route and forbids its use by Albanian nationals.

ALBANIAN LEADERSHIP

The Communist Government of Albania was largely a product of Yugoslav sponsorship and retained close ties with the Tito government until Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform in 1948. Shortly thereafter, the Secretary of the Albanian Communist Party, Koci Xoxe and a number of other important Albanian leaders were purged on charges of Titoism. Since the Cominform break, Albanian leaders have ranked among the most violent opponents of the Tito regime.

a. Army General Enver Hoxha is the premier and dictator of Albania. He is 43 years of age and was educated largely in France and Belgium. While in France he came into contact with the Communist movement and in 1941 participated in the founding of the Albanian Communist Party. He was an active partisan during the war and began his rapid rise to power at that time. He has been characterized as being primarily an intellectual, ambitious and an organizer of great ability.

b. Lt. General Mehmet Shehu is the Minister of the Interior and the second most important Albanian leader. He was educated in Albania and Italy and participated in the Spanish Civil War in the 13th "Garibaldi" International Brigade. He also served as a partisan leader during the war and after V-E Day attended the Voroshilov Academy in Moscow. As Minister of the Interior since 1948, he has been the man primarily associated with the regime's repressive activities and with the suppression of guerrilla activities.

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